

Overview Policies, Problems and Prospects of Higher Education in India

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Abstract

Indian education system traditionally served a particular segment of the society belonging to selected groups and elites. Colonial rule under the British Government developed concept of a modern state, modern economy and modern education system. After Independence, Jawaharlal Nehru visualized India as a secular democratic state. School curriculum was based on twin themes of inclusiveness and national pride, ensuring that India's different communities could live together peacefully as one nation. Higher education through institutions like IITs and IIMs formed a major contribution to the Nehruvian vision of a selfreliant and modern India. Drawing on Nehru's vision and articulating most of his themes, the Kothari Commission was set up in 1964 to formulate a coherent education policy for India. Kothari Commission felt education is meant to improve productivities, promote national and social harmony, consolidate democracy, modernize the country and develop social, moral and spiritual values. Attainment of this objective is possible only through the education policy which would provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14. According to Kothari Commission, Education policy must feature development of languages, equality of educational opportunities to all social groups and development and prioritization of scientific education and research. The Commission also lay emphasis on the removal of illiteracy and provision of adult education. The theme of the present paper is Policies, Problems and Prospects of Higher Education in India. The main objective of the present paper is to be analyze the policies, problems and prospects of Higher Education in India.

Keywords: quality education academic standards, curriculum, equality, exploration and discovery

1. Introduction

Indian education system traditionally served a particular segment of the society belonging to selected groups and elites. Colonial rule under the British Government developed concept of a modern state, modern economy and modern education system. After Independence,

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selfreliant and modern India. Drawing on Nehru's vision and articulating most of his themes, the Kothari Commission was set up in 1964 to formulate a coherent education policy for India. Kothari Commission felt education is meant to improve productivities, promote national and social harmony, consolidate democracy, modernize the country and develop social, moral and spiritual values. Attainment of this objective is possible only through the education policy which would provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14. According to Kothari Commission, Education policy must feature development of languages, equality of educational opportunities to all social groups and development and prioritization of scientific education and research. The Commission also lay emphasis on the removal of illiteracy and provision of adult education.

1.1 National Policy on Education 1986

After two decades of National Policy on education of 1968, in 1986, the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi introduced National policy on Education 1986 was introduced by then Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. According to the new policy, the 1968 was highly successful as most of the goals were achieved and the targets set were fulfilled in terms of schooling facilities, uniform system of education and introduction and application of important subjects in the course etc. As a result, more than 90 per cent of the country's rural population was within a km of schooling facilities and many states have adopted a common education structure. The prioritization of mathematics and science had also been effective. Revised National Policy on Education 1992. The 1986 policy was reviewed by a committee constituted in 1990 under the chairman of Acarya Ramamurthy. On the basis of the recommendations of this committee, certain provisions of the 1986 policy were altered in 1992. The basic objectives of the National Policy of Education of 1986 and Programme of Action of 1992 emphasized that education must play a positive and interventionist role in correcting social and regional imbalance, empowering women, and in securing rightful place for the disadvantaged and the minorities. Government should take a strong determination and commitment to provide education for all, the priority areas being free and compulsory education, covering

children with special needs, eradication of illiteracy, education for women's equality and special focus on the education of S.C. s (Scheduled caste) and S.T. s (Scheduled tribes) and Minorities.

1.2 Right to Education Act – 2009

The constitution of 86th Amendment Act, 2002, made elementary education a fundamental right and its consequential legislation (Right to Education) Right of Children to free and compulsory education Act, 2009 passed in the parliament on 4th Aug, 2009, made education a fundamental right for every child in the country.

According to this legislation, it was emphasized that Central and State governments must provide free and compulsory education to every child between the age of six and fourteen. Further, it is imperative to maintain the quality education while providing education to all. Failure to provide the quality education means denial of right to education to the children. The legislation laid emphasis on curriculum based on learning through exploration and discovery. The RTE Act makes education for every child compulsory. It was expected that compulsory education for every child through RTE Act will eliminate child labour from the country.

The Right to Education (RTE), Act 2009 was based on new perspective on inclusiveness, encompassing gender and social inclusion and ensured these become integral and crosscutting concerns in forming different aspects like training, curriculum and classroom transaction. It can amplify the voice of the disadvantaged and weaker sections of society. This can improve programme outcomes by contributing local knowledge and technical expertise and bringing innovative ideas and solutions to the challenges ahead.

Yashpal Committee: The Higher Education and Research Bill 2011, an important bill related to transformation of higher education and research regulation in institutes of higher learning was introduced by Human Resource Development Minister Mr. Kapil Sibbal on 28 December 2011. The bill is based on the Yashpal Committee report and recommendations. Based on the recommendations and suggestions given by the Yashpal Committee and National Knowledge Commission, the Central government has taken the following initiatives.

- 1) Establishment of education tribunals.

- 2) To prohibit certain malpractices in technical and medical education institutions and universities.
- 3) Regulation of entry and operation of foreign educational institutions.
- 4) Accreditation of higher educational institutions mandatory.
- 5) To improve the standard of research course and PhD degree, entrance test for the students for entry to this course was made mandatory by UGC in 2009. Stringent regulations were introduced to maintain transparency and quality research in this course.
- 6) Special Taskforce was constituted by Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) to design the structure for the establishment of National Commission for higher education and research.

Other Programmes on Education Apart from the above National policies on education to improve the quality of education the following initiatives have been taken:

- 1) Operation Blackboard (1987-88) was introduced to improve the human and physical resources available (chalk, Blackboard and other teaching aids) in primary schools.
- 2) Continuous upgrading of teacher's knowledge and competence programme 1987 aimed to improve the teaching standard and updating the same on line with changing time.
- 3) Minimum Level of Learning (1991) emphasized on the levels of achievements at various stages and revision of text books from time to time.
- 4) National programme for nutritional support to primary education (1995) felt the need to improve the physical and health of children by providing nutritious meals to which class I-V students.
- 5) District primary education programme (1993) aimed at decentralization of planning and management to enable smooth functioning of programme. It also emphasized improved teaching and learning materials to improve the knowledge of students and teachers.
- 6) Movement to Educate All (2000) aimed

to achieve Universal Primary Education by 2010 through micro planning and school mapping exercises. It also emphasized on bridging gender and social gaps.

- 7) Fundamental Rights (2001) envisaged the provision of free and compulsory education, declared to be a basic right for children aged between 6 and 14 years. It was expected that all these programmes would enable us to achieve universalisation of education.

1.3 National Education Policy 2020

National Education Policy 2020 is the first education policy of the 21st century and aims to address the many growing developmental imperatives of our country. This Policy proposes the revision and revamping of all aspects of the education structure, including its regulation and governance, to create a new system that is aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st century education, including SDG4, while building upon India's traditions and value systems. The National Education Policy lays particular emphasis on the development of the creative potential of each individual. It is based on the principle that education must develop not only cognitive capacities – both the 'foundational capacities' of literacy and numeracy and 'higher-order' cognitive capacities, such as critical thinking and problem solving – but also social, ethical, and emotional capacities and dispositions.

1.4 Present Scenario of Higher Education In India

India has one of the largest systems of higher education in the world. Higher education has expanded significantly after independence in terms of quality and range of fields of knowledge. In terms of human and physical resource there has been tremendous change in this area. There has been enormous increase in the number of students, teachers and educational institutions.

The growth rate of educational institutions in India was slow before independence in 1947 and remained stagnant during 1950-80, but now (As on August 2011) there were 611 universities and university level institutions, including 30 central universities. There are 31,324 colleges. As per the latest (2013) report issued by the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE), there are more than 3524 diploma and post-diploma offering institutions in the country with an

annual intake capacity of over 1.2 million Capacity for Management Education crossed 385000, and post graduate degree slots in Computer Science crossed 100,000. Pharmacy slots reached over 121,000. Total annual intake capacity for technical diplomas and degrees exceeded 3.4 million in 2012. Charu Sudan Kasturi reported in the Hindustan Times (New Delhi, January 10, 2011) that the number of women choosing engineering has more than doubled since 2001. Apart from this, 7 IITs, 20 National Institute of Technologies (NITs), 4 Indian Institutes of information Technologies (IIITs), 2 Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (ITSERs), 6 IIMs and I School of Planning and Architecture (SPA). Some institutions of India, such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), are known for their high standard and they are globally acclaimed for their standard of undergraduate education in engineering. The IITs enroll about 10,000 students annually. Several other institutes of fundamental research such as the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) etc., are acclaimed for their standard of research in basic sciences and mathematics. Besides top rated universities imparting highly competitive world class education, India is also home to many universities functioning like profit making business units. For example, many institutions in India continue to run courses without

accreditation as there is no legislation strong enough to ensure legal action against them. In the absence of Quality assurance mechanism India has failed to stop malpractices in higher education. The Government of India is aware of the plight of higher education sector and has been trying to bring reforms; however, 15 bills are still awaiting discussion and approval in the Parliament. One of the most talked about bill is Foreign Universities Bill which would permit foreign universities to establish campuses in India. One of the approaches to make internationalization of Indian higher education effective is to develop a broad policy for excellence in education with institutional diversity along with aids in capacity building.

In the Indian education system and legislations, a significant number of seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. In universities /Colleges/Institutions affiliated to the federal government there is a minimum 50% of reservations applicable to these disadvantaged groups. At state level it can vary. Andhra Pradesh had 83.33% reservation in 2012, which is the highest percentage of reservations in India. Scheduled caste, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backwards classes get free education and they are given 5% relaxation in entry level marks for any course they choose to join.

1.5 Growth of Higher Education in India

Items	1950-51	2010-11
Literacy Rate	18.9%	64.8% (2001)
Female Literacy Rate	8.9%	53.7%
No. of Schools	0.23 million	1.28 million
General Colleges	370	25,951
Professional Colleges	208	7797
Universities	27	504
Gross Enrolment Ratio in Elementary Education	32.1%	94.85%
Gender Parity Index at (Elementary Level)	0.38	0.92
Public Expenditure on Education as % of GDP	1.5%	3.46%

Source: Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development.

Growth of Higher Education in India After independence, higher education in the form of

colleges, universities and Science, technology and research centers have expanded in the country and attained their goals of providing education to a large section of poor students residing in rural and urban areas.

1.6 Expenditure Pattern on Higher Education in India

In the year 1950-51, the share or expenditure to GDP on higher education was 0.9 per cent by 1980-81. But it came down to 0.4% in the mid 1990s. Currently the government expenditure on education is less than 3%, of GDP including the share of higher education at 0.4 % or around 12% of the aggregate education budget. The Central government spends slightly higher than 25% and the remaining 75% spent by the State governments.

The share of higher education in 2007-08 was 11.83% of the total expenditure on education. During the first three years of the 11th plan, Central government's Plan and Non-plan expenditure and State governments Plan and Non-plan expenditures on education have increased considerably. The share of Central plan and non-plan and State Plan and Non-plan public expenditure on higher education were 8%, 13%, 6% and 73% respectively. Central plan expenditure from the 10th plan to the 11th plan has increased by 10 times.

1.7 Expenditure on Higher Education in the 11th Plan

The policy underplayed in the eleventh plan for higher education is on increasing access to quality with equity. Central universities have been established in all the states in the North Eastern region where tribal population is predominant. The Indira Gandhi National Tribal University (IGNTU) has been established in Madhya Pradesh to provide access to higher education to tribal population. There was reduction in the drop-out rates at elementary level from 52.2% in 2002-03 to 20% by 2011-12. This plan aimed at developing minimum standards of educational attainment in elementary schools to ensure quality education and increasing the literacy rate for persons of age 7 years or more to 85% by 2011-12. Reduction in gender gap in literacy to 10% points by 2011-12 was one of the features of this plan.

A Central university was established in each of those states where there is no central university. In the 11th plan, a target has been fixed to increase Gross Enrolment Ratio of eligible

students in the age group of 18-24 years in higher education by 5% by the end of the plan period. For this an amount of Rs.84,943 crores have been provided by the Central government.

With all the rhetoric about the 11th plan being an "educational plan" the actual allotment in the plan for major schemes in higher education is estimated to be only 12% of the actual requirement of Rs.2,52,000 crores. The rest of the investment is sought to be raised through Public-Private Partnership (PPP), which could actually result in large-scale privatization. The central budget for higher education for the fiscal year 2011-12 shows only an increase of 15 per cent over the last year. As per Report of the Higher education in India, Issues Related to Expansion, Inclusiveness, Quality and Finance, the access to higher education measured in term of gross enrolment ratio increased from 0.7% in 1950/51 to 1.4% in 1960-61. By 2006/7 the Gross Enrolment Ratio increased to about 11 percent. Notably, by 2012, it had crossed 20%.

1.8 Problems of Higher Education in India

According to India Human Development Report 2011, despite considerable improvement in the literacy status, India is home to the largest number of illiterate people in the world, accounting for about one third of all illiterates. Since the dropout rates at the primary level remain high, the number of illiterate could be rising. This is because many children do not complete minimum five years of schooling are not able to retain literacy skills in their adulthood. (T. S. Papola, "The Questions of Unemployment" in Bimal Jalan (ed.), *The Indian Economy: Problems and Prospects* (New Delhi), 2004) The twin issues of inclusion and equality need to be addressed while making policies for expanding access to higher education. Problems related to gender, caste, religion or regional needs are to be addressed in order to provide opportunities to disadvantaged sections. Higher education is also highly subsidized which has put unnecessary burden on the Government.

There is growing democratization and the demand for quality education in recent years in India has increased. The Union and the State governments are spending enormous amount of money to provide education to all the people in the country. But there are bottlenecks in this process. The higher education system at present suffers from several bottlenecks, such as increase in substandard institutions, deterioration of

academic standards, outdated curriculum, failure to maintain academic calendar and lack of adequate support for research.

At the beginning of the academic year 2009-10, the total number of students enrolled, in the formal system, universities and college have been reported at about 12.9%. While the world average of the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education is 26.7%, the average in of the developed countries is 57.7% and in developing countries, the average is 13%. These participation ratios are low and need to be raised substantially to make the country a knowledge based society and self reliant economy. The participation rates in education are poor largely because students from disadvantaged groups continue to find it difficult to pursue their higher education. Therefore, more universities and college need to be opened to improve the Gross Enrolment Ratio to a nominal level. In order to increase the Gross.

Enrolment ratio in higher education to 30% by 2020, the number of higher education institutions has to be doubled in number. Secondary and senior education serves as a bridge between elementary and higher education. It also forms the basis of skill formation in future. However, the spread of secondary education in India is quite limited. According to the Eleventh Five Year Plan, Gross Enrolment Ratio in secondary and senior secondary school was only 39.91% in 2004-05, whereas it was 100% in South Korea and 92% in Sri Lanka (HDR- 201).

Technical education also suffers from distortion of quality. Due to mushrooming numbers of technical education, there has been deterioration of quality and this has resulted into structural imbalance in skill requirement and deterioration of skill. For example, currently in engineering colleges Management courses (MBA) number of seats is more than the demand. As a result, students with low scores have easy entry to these courses. This has led to the growth of poor quality engineers and MBAs with poor employability skill.

Though elementary schools within a reasonable distance are now fairly universal, it is not the same with regard to secondary schools and colleges. Still in many parts of the country secondary school and college are far away from the habitations. Moreover, there are other

barriers such as socio-economic conditions, linguistic, academic that also act as changes to access the education to all.

2. Suggestions

A machinery consisting of experts should be made responsible to trace the reasons for the large number of dropouts should be set up which can also find solutions to reduce dropouts.

The public investment is already directed towards creating excellence in research and teaching in select national institutions, but it should also be diverted to those colleges which directly serve the new demand.

In the last few years, the government has spent millions in creating a vocational education system, but the money was mostly misspent. Government decision to spend on parallel system will not make any value addition to the education system when the public institutions, ITIs and local colleges, are starved of investment.

Besides, the government's quest to create a vocational education system, mostly following the British model, is already outdated. Restructuring vocational competence in line is need of the hour. For this there is an urgent need to revive the public institutions and local colleges to serve best to the local population in need.

Government must give freedom to private enterprise as some of the best educational work in India was carried out by companies like NIIT, Aptech and Educomp. Government should withdraw its subsidies and permit private universities to, which will greatly expand high quality provisions and re-establish the cost-to-outcome link as appropriate in a market situation. This is indeed difficult due to vested political interests. However, to prevent the collapse of Indian Higher education one has to think beyond the boundaries.

The Central government must finance entirely all the universities and colleges in the country. Appropriate structural transformation that would maintain uniformity while granting sufficient autonomy can be evolved for higher education institutions across the country.

A paradigm shift is needed with a focus on the use of new technologies and better utilization of existing capacity. An innovative model of Public-Private Partnership should be developed

to seek private participation in higher education without compromising the quality and equity.

The new practices of pedagogy and research can be strengthened as a matter of national education policy. The political interference of local governments and pressure groups should be minimized at the level of teaching, research and recruitments.

There is a need for complete overhaul of curriculum in universities and example curriculum in Computer systems is outdated.

Appropriate measures must be taken to provide academic infrastructural facilities to the students and staff in higher education institutions.

The budgetary allocation for education should be raised to 6 per cent of GDP and the allocation for higher education must be around 3 per cent of GDP to increase the quality, equity and better infrastructural facilities to the higher educational institutions.

The number of literate women among the female population of India was between 2–6% from the British Raj onwards to the formation of the Republic of India in 1947. Concerted efforts led to improvement from 15.3% in 1961 to 28.5% in 1981. By 2001 literacy for women had exceeded 50% of the overall female population, though these statistics were still very low compared to world standards and even male literacy within India. Government measures in this direction are worthy of attention.

Ever since 1968, India's National policy on Education, there has been rise in public expenditure on education to the level of 6% of GDP. But the expenditure of Union and State governments for education amounted to around 3% of GDP. Hence, there is a gap in financing for education which needs to be bridged urgently.

In India, education needs to be more skill oriented both in terms of life skills as well as livelihood skills. In absolute term, India has the manpower substantially to meet the global demand for labour, provided its education system can convert the numbers in to a skilled workforce with the needy skill diversity. Management of Indian higher education needs to build in greater decentralization, accountability, and professionalism. So that it is able to deliver good quality education to all.

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